Islam comes from the root word 'salaam', meaning peace. When our individual and collective lives are in harmony with nature and with the will of the Creator, peace is inevitable. Islam, as a way of life, is the solution to all problems of the human race, and is the only hope for the present as well as the future. The need is to practice it faithfully.

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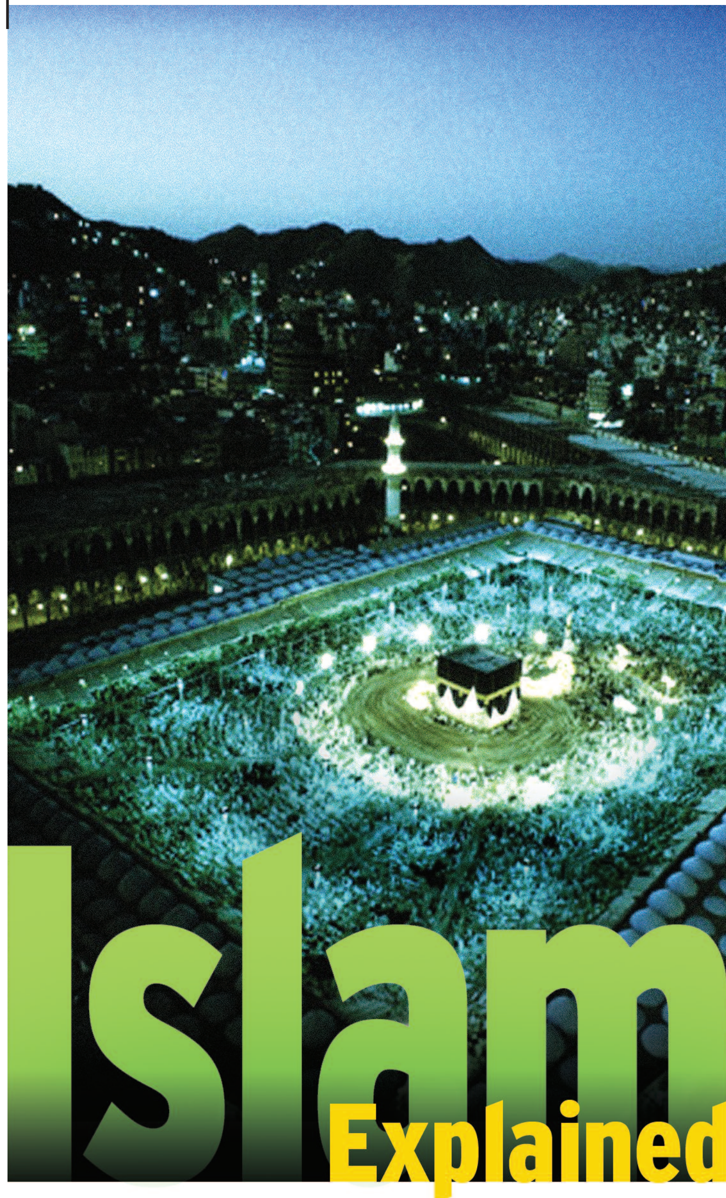
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In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

"To the righteous soul will be said: O (thou) soul, in (complete) rest and satisfaction! Come back to your Lord, well pleased (yourself), and well pleasing unto Him! Enter you, then, among my devotees! And enter you My Heaven!" [Al-Qur'an 89: 27-28]

Islam, the religion of over 1.2 billion in the world, provides humankind with a unified view about the purpose of our creation and existence, our ultimate destiny and our place among other creatures. It is a way of life that is in complete conformance with nature, and with reason, logic and science.

The Arabic word, 'Islam', means voluntary surrender to the will of Allah and obedience to His commands. 'Allah' is the Arabic word that Muslims use for God. A person who freely and consciously accepts the Islamic way of life and sincerely practices it is called a 'Muslim'.

ONENESS OF GOD (TAWHID) is the most important Islamic belief. It implies that everything in existence originates from the one and only Creator, who is also the Sustainer and the sole Source of Guidance. This belief should govern all aspects of human life. Recognition of this fundamental truth results in a unified view of existence that rejects any divisions of life into the religious and the secular. Allah is the sole source of Power and Authority and therefore entitled to worship and obedience from mankind. There is no scope for any partnership with the Creator. Tawhid teaches man that Allah is not born, nor is anyone born of Him. He has no son or daughter. Human beings, like the rest of creation, are His subjects.

PROPHETHOOD (RISALAH) or Messengership. Since the creation of the first human, Allah has revealed His guidance to mankind by sending prophets, who all called to the belief of One God. The prophets who received books from Allah are called messengers. Whenever the teachings of a prophet were distorted by people Allah sent another prophet to bring human beings back to the Straight Path. The chain of Risalah began with Adam, included Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and Jesus, and ended with Muhammad (peace be upon them all), as the final messenger of Allah to all of mankind.

The revealed books from Allah are: the Torah (Tawrah), the Psalms (Zabur), the Gospel (Injeel) and the Qur'an. The Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)[1], as the final book of Guidance. Among all these books, it is only the Qur'an that remains unchanged, in its original revealed form.

LIFE AFTER DEATH (AKHIRAH) This belief has a profound impact on the life of a believer by making them accountable to Allah. On the Day of Judgment we will be judged according to how we lived our lives. One who obeys and worships Allah will be rewarded with a permanent place of happiness and bliss in Paradise; One who does not do so will be sent to Hell, a place of punishment and suffering.

FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

Acting correctly and sincerely on the five pillars transforms a Muslim's life into one that is in harmony with nature and thus in conformity with the will of the Creator. It inspires one to work towards the establishment of justice, equality and righteousness in society, and the eradication of injustice, falsehood and evil.

1.TESTIMONY (Shahadah), the first of the five basic foundations, is the declaration, knowingly and voluntarily, of: La ilaha illal lahu Muhammadur rasulul lah. "There is no god except Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah". This declaration is the basis of all actions in Islam, and the other basic duties follow this affirmation.

2. COMPULSORY PRAYER (Salah) is offered five times a day. It is a practical demonstration of faith, and keeps a believer in touch with their Creator. The Salah develops in a believer the qualities of self-discipline, steadfastness and obedience to the Truth, leading one to be patient, honest and truthful in the affairs of their life.

3. CHARITY (Zakah) is a compulsory payment from a Muslim's annual savings. It can only be spent on helping the poor, the needy, and the oppressed, and for the general upliftment of society. Zakah is one of the fundamental principles of Islamic economy, which ensures an equitable society where everyone has a right to contribute and share.

4. FASTING (Sawm) is the annual obligatory fasting during each day of the month of Ramadan - the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. One must refrain from eating, drinking, smoking, and sex, from dawn to sunset. Sawm develops a believer's moral and spiritual standard and keeps them away from selfishness, greed, extravagance and other vices. Sawm is an annual training program that increases a Muslim's determination to fulfill their obligation to the Almighty Lord.

5. PILGRIMAGE (Hajj) is an annual event, obligatory on those Muslims who can afford to undertake it, at least once in their lifetime. It is a pilgrimage (journey) to the "House of Allah" (Al-Ka'bah) in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, in the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar. Hajj symbolizes the unity of humankind; Muslims from every race and nationality assemble together in equality and fraternity to worship their Lord.

THE QUR'AN

The Qur'an is the final Book of guidance from Allah, revealed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) through the angel Gabriel (Jibra'il). Every word of the Qur'an is the word of Allah. The Qur'an is unrivaled in its recording and preservation. Unlike other scriptures that were corrupted with human interpolations and omissions, the Qur'an has remained unchanged, even to a letter, for over 1400 years. The Qur'an is the last and final revelation to mankind and covers all aspects of human life, and its relation to the life after death.

THE HADITH

The Hadith is the collection of sayings, actions and silent approvals of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). It explains the Qur'an, and how to practice it. The Hadith were recorded meticulously by the Prophet's companions.

PROPHET MUHAMMAD

Muhammad (pbuh), the final messenger of Allah, was born in Mecca, Arabia, in the year 571 CE. He received the first revelation from Allah at the age of forty. The people of Mecca at that time used to worship idols. The Prophet (pbuh) invited them to Islam. Some of them accepted and became Muslims, while others rebuked him and turned against him. In the 13th year of his Prophethood, Muhammad (pbuh) migrated from Mecca to Madinah.

The Prophet (pbuh) organized the early Muslims and preached the message of Allah with patience and profound wisdom. Eventually Islam was established in the whole of Arabia and was set to make a tremendous contribution to the history and civilization of the world. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) died in 632 CE at the age of 63. He left behind the Qur'an and his Sunnah (way) as the source of guidance for all generations to come.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

Marriage is the basis of family life in Islam. It is a solemn yet simple contract between a consenting man and a consenting woman. Islam does not allow the free mixing of men and women; nor does it allow sex before marriage. Extra-marital sex is severely punishable. No discrimination is made on the basis of sex. Husband and wife are equal partners of the family and play their part in their respective fields.

DIET

Muslims are encouraged to eat what is good for them. Islamic law requires an animal to be slaughtered while invoking the name of Allah. All varieties of alcoholic drinks are prohibited. Pork and blood are also forbidden.

DRESS

Muslims must cover their bodies properly and decently. When it comes to dressing-up, simplicity and modesty are encouraged. No particular dress is recommended, however, men must cover their body from navel to the knees. Women must cover their whole body except the face and hands. Any dress that is suggestive, transparent, skin-tight or half-naked may send wrong signals to others; signals that are contrary to Islam's teachings. Pure silk and gold are not allowed for men.

SOCIAL MANNERS

Islam teaches decency, humility and good manners. Keeping promises, truthfulness, justice, fair play, helping the poor and needy, respect for parents, teachers and elders, love for children and good relations with neighbors and relatives are the most valued virtues of a Muslim. Islam condemns enmity, back-biting, slander, blasphemy, ridicule, use of offensive names, suspicion and arrogance.

1. (p) here stands for "peace be upon him"